



"Insider trading simply means people utilising information they have," argues Tame.

THE SAVAGE WORLD OF MR TAME

Privatise money supply, prisons and rainforests; free trade of all government restraints; legalise pimping: Chris Tame's brand of economic libertarianism produces some hair-raising suggestions.

CHRIS Tame is a self-confessed vitamin C freak and health fanatic. He's also Director of FOREST, the so-called "smoker's rights" organisation. (Freedom Organisation for the Right to Enjoy Smoking Tobacco.) Chris Tame supports lesbian and homosexual rights, yet though childless he is happily married and says he likes women "very, very much".

Chris Tame believes smut peddlers should be allowed to disseminate filth and pornographic literature, and that Nazis should be permitted to broadcast antisemitic propaganda over the radio and on TV, yet by his own admission he has no interest in pornography and as well as being a philosemitic is a supporter of Israel and his wife is Jewish.

Chris Tame wants to privatise the rainforests and legalise pimping. Instead of being prosecuted, he says insider traders should be praised. What sort of loony is Chris Tame? Just your average, run-of-the-mill libertarian.

So what is libertarianism? Libertarians are those foolish people who take the slogans of the left and the anarchists at face value. Where the left say "free speech" the libertarians mean literally free speech for everyone however distasteful and unreasonable their views. And where the anarchists say "Smash the state!" the libertarians say annihilate it - in short, sell it off lock, stock and barrel: the health service, the media, the police, the courts, natural resources - the lot. The rationale behind this is that anything that can be owned should be owned because public property is nobody's property. Only when someone can point to something and say: That's mine! does waste and inefficiency stop.

In spite of his bizarre philosophy, there are those who might cast doubts on Mr Tame's motives for working for FOREST. When asked how much he is paid for promoting "smokers' rights" his reply in a roundabout way was: Mind your own business. Judging from his lifestyle, he is paid handsomely, but anyone who might suggest his conversion to libertarianism is sudden and pragmatic, a way of ingratiating himself sufficiently with the tobacco industry is barking up the wrong tree.

Before joining FOREST, Chris worked

in the financial sector with his wife; she is a libertarian feminist. Before that he worked variously for the Institute of Economic Affairs, the leading free market think tank; the Freedom Association; and the Libertarian Alliance, of which he is still a leading member.

Tame's commitment to free speech, does not extend to libels against himself. Recently an anti-smoking campaigner was foolish enough to libel him outrageously on the radio. Libertarian principles or not, he sued and is currently awaiting a substantial out-of-court settlement.

PROFILE

Talking of courts, how does Mr Tame propose to privatise the courts and the entire system of jurisprudence and law enforcement? The first thing he stresses is that there is nothing dogmatic about any of his "free market anarchy". He is in favour of experimenting if something works, fine; if it doesn't, try something else. And as far as law and order is concerned, there are precedents. "... a large part of English common law arose within the free market as private law, and the whole merchant law (the law of the sea) arose as private law."

Private arbitration

Outside of the purely criminal law, most disputes could be resolved by private arbitration. Before attending a tribunal, bonds would have to be posted by both sides, and because it is in people's interests to resolve disputes, they would be settled more quickly and more cheaply.

Privatised jails already exist in the States, but how would you go about privatising the police? Firstly you would allow people to set up forces which could supply protective services. After all, it's not illegal for people to make (citizens') arrests. Therefore why shouldn't it also be legal for organised bodies to make such arrests?

TV and Radio? "The idea that they

should be controlled by the state is outrageous." Every group from extremist political parties to music companies to lunatic evangelical Christians should be allowed to broadcast anything they want.

The environment? The solution to environmental problems is to privatise them: the rainforests, the whales etc. "There are only environmental problems because there aren't proper private property rights. The rainforests should be owned by the peasantry, the local agriculturalists, whoever wanted to purchase them." If people in the West think the rainforests are worth conserving, they should be allowed to buy them and conserve them ... ditto the whales and everything else under the sun.

Prostitution? This is essentially a free market already; unfortunately, while prostitution is legal, soliciting and living off immoral earnings are not. Because of this, prostitutes and their clients suffer all sorts of harassment. Far better to decriminalise it completely and allow them to ply their trade under the common law from the safety and comfort of brothels.

The economics of smoking? If one accepts the figure of £500m per annum cost to the health service, tax revenues currently bring in something like £6bn, so smokers are financing not only the cost of their own treatment, but the cost of everyone else's! The tobacco industry, like any other industry, supplies goods and services to its consumers on a voluntary basis, and should be allowed to do so.

Banking? Money should be denationalised and "free banking" introduced. Basically this means that instead of creating credit out of nothing and lending it at interest (as they do now) banks and indeed any company should be permitted to issue their own currency notes backed up by their own resources. So BP for example could issue x million notes backed by so many million barrels of oil.

Trade and foreign aid? Aid is a rip off. All it is is governments in the West ripping off productive people in the West to subsidise unproductive governments in the Third World to oppress their own people. "The system is one of total corruption which is against the interests of both the West and the Third World." We should practise total free trade, unilaterally if necessary.

Insider trading? This is a very dubious concept. "Insider dealing simply means people utilising information they have." If an individual has a specific contract with his employer not to use information in a particular way, then that should be legally binding. With that caveat, insider trading is a totally moral and economically productive activity. For the state to legislate otherwise is just a ridiculous restriction on the free market, because information is precisely what the free market is all about. So now you know!

ALEXANDER BARON